

## Original Article

# The effect of parent-child relationship styles on the social adjustment of the adolescent girls

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The purpose of this study was to examine and compare the social adjustment in balanced and non-balanced patterns of the parent-child relationship.

**Methods:** The research population was all female gifted students in the Farzanegan high school in the first educational district of Tehran in 2013-14. The sample research included 96 female gifted students who answered the parent-child relationship model questionnaire and the social adjustment subscale of the Bell adjustment inventory. After scoring their responses and removing uncompleted ones, Sample population was divided into three groups of: the balanced, the non-balances liberal based, and the non-balanced secure-based patterns of parent-child relationship. Data were analyzed by the SPSS using one-way ANOVA.

**Results:** The results showed that the mother-child pattern of the relationship influenced on the child's social adjustment, while there was no significant influence for the father-child pattern of the relationship.

**Conclusion:** It should be taken into account that the results of this study shows the social adjustment in young ages and before being independent from the family, but the secure-based pattern essentially does not train individuals with high social adjustment.

**Declaration Interest:** None.

**Keywords:** Social Adjustment, Parent-Child relationship Model (Balanced Pattern, Liberal-Based Pattern, Secure-Based Pattern).

## Introduction

Social adjustment has been considered as the most important indicator of mental health. The criteria for the measurement of the individual's social development, is the amount of his adjustment with others. Social development is effective not only on the adjustment with others whom the individual communicate with but also on the person's amount of educational and occupational success (Robbinson, 2009 as quoted by Basir shabestari et al., 2013. Generally, the social adjustment is considered as the most important factor related to the individual and the society. Thus, prerequisite for healthy society is to have healthy people and the more adjustment people it has, the more healthy society it would be. Socialization is a mutually relational process between an individual and a society; so that it is

considered as the complex process which includes various aspects and dimensions. Learning social skills, way of communicating with others, and social adjustment are among these dimensions (Hashemi, 2012).

Family as a first social environment that a child paces into has a major role in formation of the child's individual and social characteristics. The central roles of the parents in forming such characteristics are unquestionable. Improper parenting style leads to the development of unintendedly inappropriate social behaviors which contribute majorly to individuals' relationships with their friends and peers, and generally to their responses to different social situations (Yazdanpanah et al 2012).

The main aim of training in the family area which is enhancing the children's ability in directedness,

means that children can consciously and watchfully discern friends from enemies, and distinguish between what that has a bad influence on their development and what that has a good effect on their evolution, and also make selections that result in the individual's growth, awareness, consciousness, and more capability for controlling and managing their life. The existence of the system of values, beliefs and rules, repository of the experience and so the skills, and also the distinguishing of self from others, dependent identity, and self-acceptance are considered as essential factors to form purposeful behaviors in order to make a child ready for an independent and self-reliant life (Bagheri, 2012).

Factor analysis studies have identified two main factors in parenting. The first factor can be described as a "care" and is related to the behaviors such as acceptance and warmth and on the other hand rejection and criticism. The second factor is called the "control" and is related to parental control and over supportiveness and on the other hand encouraging the autonomy. It has been said that the parental warmth and acceptance are related to the children's secure attachment (Rofls et al. as quoted by Azad mousavi and Jalili 2014). Bagheri (2012) has provided the patterns of the balanced and non-balanced parent-child relationship in an attempt to present a folklore model for Iranian society. He introduces the parent-child model which has for main aspects: 1) the values, beliefs, and principles; 2) support to gain experience; 3) individuality; and 4) self-acceptance. At the both ends of each aspect are the extreme states which lead to damage in the forming of purposefulness and directedness of the individual's mental and behavioral systems. In the middle of these four dimensions, the balance state of these for variables locate, which more present the ideal and normal status of them. The meaning of normal and ideal state is that it is hardly to find some family that its parent-child relationship would be in a complete accordance with these four states; Each of these four states in four dimensions constitutes the elements of the certain pattern of the parent-child relationship. Therefore, the three main patterns of this model are: 1) the secure-based pattern; 2) the liberal-based pattern; and 3) the balanced pattern. Based on the studies that their findings are being published in scientific papers, it is impossible to

fully assign a parent-child relationship to one of these patterns. The data collected by the questionnaire designed and validated based on this theoretical model have demonstrated the fact that for describing the style of parent-child relationship is better to use the profile instead of the certain pattern. The parents' behaviors are rarely having a complete tendency to any states of a certain pattern. Particularly, some compensating state is observed between the father-child pattern and the mother-child pattern, meaning that the intense tendency of the father to one of these patterns is compensated with the mother's intense tendency to the opposite one (Bagheri, 2012). The consequences of three patterns of the parent-child relationship in terms of motivation and social communications are as follows:

1) Secure-based pattern of the parent-child relationship: this pattern activates the avoidance motivation (Bao Meister, 2012 as quoted by Bagheri, 2012). The superiority of avoidance motivation leads that the individual's purposeful behaviors form because of fear and avoidance from the unpleasant consequences. Individuals with this system of motivation have a powerful will to control their emotions, obey the rules, and respect the advices. But, because of the type of their targets they are not satisfied with their lives. Since the fulfilment of their targets reduces their fear and anxiety, it does not lead to the sense of satisfaction and happiness.

2) Liberal-based pattern of parent-child relationship: this pattern activates the approach motivation (Bao Meister, 2012 as quoted by Bagheri, 2012). Thus, the children trained based on this pattern cannot do every kind of thing and cannot force themselves to do everything. They become responsible just for tasks and activities that have enthusiasm and interest on them. In social relationships, these children who focus on their needs and interests, respect less for others and easily determine the boundaries for them. Therefore, they cause irritation and indifference in others in social interactions, though at the same time others respect their boundaries and borders.

3) The balanced pattern of parent-child relationship: this pattern of parent-child relationship provides an ideal status, meaning that it is so hard to find a family that its pattern of relationship between parents and children completely accord with this pattern. It is obvious

that one can expect the both system of motivations, avoidance and approach, grow almost the same in children of this pattern. In other words, children trained in this pattern have the capability to obey the rules and requirements, inhibit their impulses, enthusiasms, and interest, and also to being familiar with their interests and enthusiasms and so have the capability to define and follow their goals based on their interests and enthusiasms, if necessary. In social relationship, these children relatively have higher capabilities. They have both attraction and repulsion in their relationships. In other words, they can tolerate in emergencies, while in facing with threats they can fundamentally change in the main path and direction of their lives. If the situation is contrary to the basis of their identity, they will show repulsion and determine the boundaries and restrictions for others (Bagheri, 2012).

Considering the importance of the social adjustment as one of the essential criteria of adjustment in today civilized society, in this study it has been tried to examine the association of social adjustment with the pattern of the parent-child relationship. We investigated to answer to the question that what is the effect of parents' tendencies to liberty and security on their adolescent girls' social adjustment.

### Methods

The research method used in this study was casual – comparative method. Research sample included 96 female students from the Farzanegan high school in the first educational district of Tehran in 2013-14; Samples were selected as purposive sampling. To select the sample groups, 100 available students from different high school levels filled the questionnaire of parent-child relationship and the subscale of social adjustment from Bell adjustment inventory. After a description of questionnaires and research purposes was assured to people that their personal information will remain confidential and does not require authentication and then they were asked answer the questions with ultimately accuracy and integrity. after scoring the questionnaires and removing not completely answered ones, the sample research was divided and assigned to three sample groups of the balanced parent-child relationship, the unbalanced liberal-based parent-child relationship, and the unbalances secure-

based parent-child relationship. Questionnaires used in this study as data gathering tools were as follows:

*Bell Adjustment Inventory:* This inventory was designed by Bell (1961). The adjustment inventory provides five separate measures of personal and social adjustment. It consists of 140 items, which are to be answered in yes, no or Question Mark (?), pertaining to four adjustment domains that are, home, and health, social, emotional, educational and occupational. Evaluation of these five types of adjustment determines the situation and difficulties of adjustment. The total score can be used to report the general adjustment. Bahrami (1992 as quoted by fathi ashtiani and Dadsetani, 2009) revised this inventory and reduced the number of questions to 80, each subscale with 16 questions. The pre- and posttest reliability for this inventory was reported from 0.7 to 0.93, and its internal consistency was variable between 0.74 and 0.93. The reliability coefficient for the social adjustment subscale was reported 0.88. This test has shown a good validity in recognizing the normal group from neurotics, also has a high correlation with Eysenck Personality test. Bahrami (1992 as quoted by Gorzin, 2011) conducted this inventory on 200 individuals selected randomly, and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.89. The social adjustment subscale of this inventory was used in this study.

*The questionnaire of the parent-child model:* It is a folklore questionnaire designed by Bagheri (2013). Its short form has 80 questions in five Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree, they are assigned points 1 to 5. This questionnaire is based on a theoretical model and consists of three main patterns of the relationships between parents and children. These patterns include: 1) secure-based pattern, 2) balanced pattern, and 3) liberal-based pattern. Each of two main styles, the secure-based and the liberal-based, has four related subscales. The subscales of the secure-based pattern include: 1) decisiveness and flexibility, 2) control and restriction, 3) formality, and 4) conditional acceptability. Each subscale has 10 questions. The subscales of the liberal-based pattern include: 1) destabilization and softness, 2) cossetting, 3) friendship and lack of respect, 4) abandonment and neglect. Each subscale has 10 questions (Bagheri, 2013). The

result of Bagheri's research (2013) has shown that all eight subscales has a high reliability and can be considered as a pattern of parent-child relationship among Iranian population. The total reliability of the short form questionnaire was 0.66 and the reliability of each subscale was between 0.90-0.95 (Bagheri, 2013).

Descriptive statistics (to calculate mean and standard deviation statistics) and inferential statistics (ANOVA test for independent groups) were used to analyze data; the aim of using this method was to compare the girls' social adjustments among different patterns of parent-child relationships. Data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics software Version 21.

## Results

Based on the operational definition of each pattern of parent-child relationship, each of three relationship styles was extracted and shown in table 3.

Table 1. frequency distribution of research groups

Model relationship	Mother		Father	
	Frequen cy	Percent	Frequen cy	Percent
balanced	50	50/5	46	47/9
Liberal-based	31	31.3	31	32/3
Secure-based	18	2.18	19	8.19
Total	99	100	96	100

Among 100 participants, four individuals from the father-child relationship model and one

individual from the mother-child relationship model were removed. In the model of the mother-child relationship the percentage of liberal-based and secure-based patterns of relationships were 31% and 18 respectively. These percentages for the model of the father-child relationship were 32% and 20%. As it can be seen in the table 3, the balanced pattern of relationship with mother is higher than with father.

To examine the Questions of the study the ANOVA test was used. As the normality of the dependent variable is a prerequisite for the ANOVA test, the normality was checked via Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The result was shown in table 2.

Table 2. Normality test of the dependent variable

Variable	Z	P
social adjustment	0.904	0.388

The significance level of the test shows that the distribution of the variable's scores was normal. Another prerequisite for using ANOVA test is the equality of the Variances of populations, Levin test was used. The result was shown in table 3.

Table 3. the equality of Variances

Variable	Levene	df1	df2	P
social adjustment	2.544	2	93	0.084

As significance value of the Levene test is more than 0.05, so the variance of the population is equal.

Since the prerequisites of the ANOVA test were met, so the ANOVA test was used to compare the girls' social adjustment among three patterns of the mother-child and the father child relationship.

Table 4. the analysis of the social adjustment based on the mother-child relationship model

relationship model	Group	N	M	SD	Group	SS	MS	DF	F	P
<i>mother-child</i> Liberal-based 31 10.03 5.38 Within 2660.49 27.71 96	Balanced	50	9.78	4.76	Between	258.41	129.2	2	4.66	0.012
	Secure-based	18	14.05	6.31	Total	2918.9		98		
	Balanced	46	10.45	4.58	Between	33.349	16.675	2	0.568	0.57
	Liberal-based	31	10.09	5.06	Within	2729.80	29.353	93		
<i>father-child</i>	Secure-based	19	11.73	7.5	Total	2763.156		95		

The data of the above table show the results of ANOVA test to examine the comparison of the social adjustment scores based on the parenting style (related to mother and father). It can be seen that the F test confirms the significant difference between the social adjustments in terms of the mother-child relationship styles, since the its significant level ( $p=0,012$ ) is less than 0,05. Therefore, the influence of the mother-child relationship style on the social adjustment is confirmed. But the data of the above table show not significant difference among the social adjustment based on the child-father relationship model. In other words the pattern of the father-child relationship did not influence on the social adjustment.

To find the place of difference among groups Tukey and LSD tests were used. Their results are provided in table 5.

Table 5. the results of post-hoc ANOVA test, Tukey HSD

Test	The pattern of mother-child (I)	The pattern of mother-child (J)	Difference (I-J)	P
Tukey HSD	balanced	Liberal-based	-0.2523	0.976
		Secure-based	4.2756 (*)	0.011
	Liberal-based	Balanced	0.2523	0.976
		Secure-based	4.0233 (*)	0.030
	Secure-based	Balanced	4.2756 (*)	0.011
		Liberal-based	4.0233 (*)	0.030

As table 5 shows, post-hoc ANOVA tests show that the social adjustment was different between balanced and secure-based patterns and between liberal-based and secure-based patterns. In Other words, the balanced pattern was not different with the liberal based pattern based on the social adjustment, while the secure based pattern was significantly different with both of them. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social adjustment in the balanced pattern was lower than the secure-based pattern, and it is higher in the secure-based pattern than the liberal-based pattern.

## Conclusion

The results showed that the girls' social adjustment related to the relationship with their mother was lower in the balanced pattern compared to the secure-based one, and was higher in the secure-based pattern compared to the liberal-based one. In other words, the balanced and the liberal-based patterns did not differ from each other in their influence on the social adjustment; while the secure-based pattern significantly differ from these two in its effect on the social adjustment. In the explanation for this result, it can be declared that consisting with Begheri's comment (2012) the secure-based pattern activates the avoidance motivation in an individual; meaning that individuals with this type of motivation try their best to avoid unpleasant consequences. These individuals follow dos and don'ts to reduce their fear and anxiety. In the social relationship, children trained based on a secure-based pattern have tendencies to tolerate, respect for others, be patient, and put others' need in their priority. They cannot say no, so others like them more (Bagheri, 2012). Following the dos and don'ts and respecting for others increase these individuals' social adjustment scores, since the social adjustment emphasizes on the level that individuals obey the social norms and rules and also the amount that they adapt themselves with the environment and others. Therefore, it is not surprising that children trained by the controlling parents obtain higher scores, even if they are not satisfied or happy with their personal lives.

It should also be mentioned that children trained in the secure-based pattern shows higher social adjustment because the family with this pattern of relationship have stronger traditions, are careful about the way of the upbringing up children and try to protect them from deviation. Therefore, they more teach their children to follow from the rules in their selections. Thus, it seems logical that these children have higher adjustment and obedience and mostly place at the end of the queue in the western and comparative societies. They cannot say no, cannot defend them, endure lots of pressure, and occasionally suffers from psychosomatic disorders. They are extremely and actually adjustable based on the Iranian culture and in a pathologic sense as well, especially when

the flexibility is referred to the adjustment. Bagheri (2012) also declares that the liberal-based pattern of the parent-child relationship activates the approach motivation. Thus, the children trained based on this pattern do not do every kind of task and cannot force themselves to do every kind of mission. They take responsibility only for tasks and missions that they have interest and enthusiasm about. In the social relationship, these children focus on their needs, demands, and interests, they less respect for others, and make boundaries and limitations for others easily. Therefore, it is not surprising that the individuals trained based on this pattern of relationship follow from the rules and norms that are consistence with their interests and do not force themselves to obey from the rules that they do not accept or bother them. In social relationships, they show less adjustment and their relationships with others are impaired and tensioned; they observe other people as tools for reaching their needs and use them as a ladder to promotion. The result of this style of the relationship is to train the kind of children who show less adjustment compared to secure-based pattern. As another explanation, it is probable that in the secure-based pattern, the dos and don'ts and rules become internalized and make an individual has a strong and punisher superego. Therefore, any offence or violation of laws and others' dissatisfaction make him very anxious. Thus, it is not surprising that these individuals would be submissive, love seeking, and putting others' satisfaction prior to their needs in order to release and avoid from this anxiety. Love seeking and others' foregoing can superficially be evidences of a good social relationship and a proper communication with other people, and can increase the scores in the social adjustment questionnaire.

As it can be seen, there was no significant difference in the social adjustment based on the father-child relationship; In other words, the pattern of father-child relationship does not influence on the social adjustment. One of the probable cause for this result can be faded roles that fathers may have in girls' upbringing. Another possible cause is the less impressionability of girls from the pattern of the relationship with the father. However, each of these causes is mentioned as a probable reason and reaching to

the firm answer needs more research and further study in this field.

It should be taken into account that the results of this study shows the social adjustment in young ages and before being independent from the family, but the secure-based pattern essentially does not train individuals with high social adjustment. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize this result to all the life span, especially to after the independency from the main family. The results may not be true at the age of autonomy and independency from the family. At the end, it should be borne in mind that the results of this study cannot be generalized to all Iranian female adolescences and to the Iranian boy population. Thus, further research among different samples while considering the interweaving variables are recommended.

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